Australian Government

Inspector-General of Water Compliance

Murray–Darling Basin community perceptions research 2023

Project overview and research methodology

Research overview and qualitative methodology

The primary objective for the research was to understand broader community perceptions across the Basin to **inform ongoing tracking of trust and confidence in water compliance and management.**

Project overview

Project establishment
- Project inception
- Creation of research instruments

Qualitative research
n=67 Basin community participants (including water licence holder [WLH] participants)

Quantitative research
Online and CATI Basin community survey (including WLHs) (n=1,014)

Analysis and reporting
- Final report
- Publication

Qualitative research methodology

The **qualitative research** was conducted from 30 October - 28 November 2023. It was used to check community sentiment changes from the previous research and further inform understanding of the quantitative research data.

A **total of n=67** participants participated in the qualitative research, across:

8 x focus groups (FG)
n=64 participants

1 x one-on-one in-depth interviews (IDI)
n=1 participants

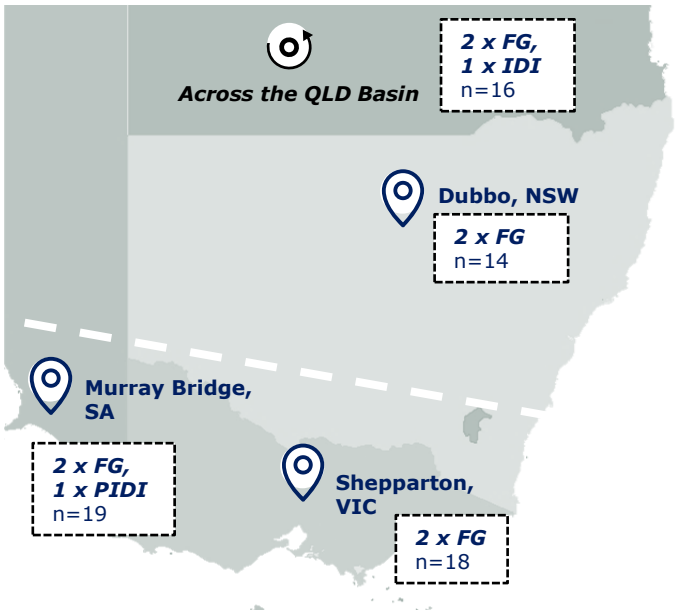
1 x paired in-depth interviews (PIDI)
n=2 participants

TARGET AUDIENCES

Commercial users of waterways
(including water licence holders and business owners)
n=19 participants

Community members
(including those more and less engaged with waterways)
n=48 participants

LOCATIONS



Quantitative research methodology

The quantitative research was conducted between 31 October – 30 November 2023. **1,014 people were surveyed across the Murray—Darling Basin**, with questions tailored to each audience to account for differences in experiences (i.e. water licence holders compared to community members).

Quantitative research methodology

The quantitative research comprised **telephone and online surveys with water licence holders** and **residents of the Murray–Darling Basin area (community)**.

The Basin was divided into 12 areas (shown in the figure opposite), with minimum quotas set for each area. The number of completed community surveys ranged from n=33 to 148 per area.

Water licence holders (n=214)

Quantitative research was conducted via **n=150 Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI)** and **n=64 online surveys**.

The survey was conducted **with water licence holders who operated in the Murray–Darling Basin.**

Basin community (n=800)

Quantitative research was conducted via **n=769 online surveys** and **n=31 CATI**.

The survey was conducted with **residents aged 18 and over living in the Murray–Darling Basin area**.

Explanatory notes

Project background

In May 2021, the Australian Government introduced a Bill amending the Water Act 2007 (the Water Act) to establish the **Inspector-General of Water Compliance** (IGWC) to oversee and monitor water compliance in the Murray–Darling Basin (the Basin). Through this role, the Inspector General commits to **delivering trust and transparency, accountability, and engagement** with the community around the management of Murray–Darling Basin water resources. In 2022, ORIMA conducted initial exploratory research with Basin community members and water licence holders/ irrigators to establish **baseline community perceptions and sentiment** towards water management, compliance and enforcement in the Basin, and to inform the establishment of the **IGWC's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for community sentiment**. In 2023, the IGWC commissioned ORIMA Research to conduct tracking research to monitor changes in community sentiment over time, as well as to measure the IGWC's performance against its KPIs.

Weighting considerations in the quantitative research methodology

The survey questions were tailored to each audience, to account for the differences in their experiences (i.e. water licence holders compared to community members).

The survey data for the Community audience was weighted to align with the sample distributions for age, location and gender of respective population benchmarks from ABS Census data. The survey data for water licence holders was weighted to align with the distribution across states/ territory for the number of irrigating farms, based on ABS farm water use statistics (Australian Bureau of Statistics (2020-21), Water Use on Australian Farms). Updates to the weighting approach were made to the current research and comparisons to the previous wave to factor in the most recent and robust ABS data publicly available. Please note that this update accounts for some minor differences to previously reported results due to weighting changes.

Explanatory notes

Presentation of findings throughout the report

When reporting the research results, the following references have been used to differentiate between the quantitative and qualitative research findings:

- The term '**participant(s)**' refers to participant(s) in the qualitative research whilst '**respondent(s)**' refers to respondent(s) from the quantitative survey; and
- **Numbers** and **percentages** used only refer to the quantitative research findings.

Understanding the qualitative research findings
In some cases, qualitative data has been presented without quantitative data. In these cases, it should be noted that the exact number of participants holding a particular view on individual issues cannot be measured*.

The following terms used in the report provide a qualitative indication and approximation of the size of the target audience who held particular views:


Most—refers to findings that relate to **more than three quarters** of the research participants;


Many—refers to findings that relate to **more than half** of the research participants;


Some—refers to findings that relate to **around a third** of the research participants; and


A few—refers to findings that relate to **less than a quarter** of research participants.

The most common qualitative findings are reported except in certain situations where only a minority has raised particular issues, but these are nevertheless considered to be important and to have potentially wide-ranging implications or applications.

*Measurement is not the intent of qualitative research.

Understanding the quantitative research findings
Percentages from the quantitative survey presented in the report are based on the total number of valid responses made to the question being reported on. In most cases, results reflect those respondents who had a view and for whom the questions were applicable. Arrows are used to denote where results are significantly different from the previous year's results.

This project was conducted in accordance with the international quality standard ISO 20252, the international information security standard ISO 27001, as well as the Australian Privacy Principles contained in the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth). ORIMA Research also adheres to the Privacy (Market and Social Research) Code 2021 administered by the Australian Data and Insights Association (ADIA).